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Country programme outline for Mauritania (2002-2008)*

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* The collection and analysis of current data required to present the Executive Board with the most up-to-date information have delayed submission of the present document.

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I. Situation analysis

1. Mauritania belongs to the group of least developed countries. Its territory is vast, desert and sparsely populated (2.5 million inhabitants). Approximately half the population live below the poverty line.

2. After 15 years of structural reform, in 2002 the Mauritanian economy has a secure foundation: a stabilized macroeconomic framework, internal and external deficits almost under control, real growth of around 5 per cent and poverty reduced from 56.5 per cent to 46.3 per cent between 1990 and 2000.

3. This situation largely explains why Mauritania was declared eligible for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative II as of January 2000, its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) was approved in January 2001 and the completion point was reached in May 2002. The Strategic Framework for Poverty Reduction (SFPR) was prepared with the support of UNDP and the other agencies in the country team. It is based mostly on international development goals and is consistent with the objectives of the Millennium Declaration, since it aims to more than halve poverty and to improve living conditions by 2015.

4. In the past two years, the pace of economic and social reform has accelerated sharply, often with specific assistance from UNDP. Noteworthy developments include the adoption of a new investment code, large-scale privatization, the adoption of a general framework for good governance, the definition of a strategy for developing information and communication technologies (ICT) and the establishment of a government ministry for that purpose, the adoption of an environmental code, the adoption of a strategy of universal access to basic services, the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the adoption of a personal status code and the enactment of a law making school attendance mandatory.

5. The overall political context is stable and significant progress was made in 2001, with the reform of the electoral system and the holding of legislative and municipal elections (with technical support from UNDP) whose transparency and openness were unprecedented in the country. A decision was also taken in 2001 to launch a human rights awareness programme and to formulate a human rights action plan under the leadership of UNDP.

6. Although progress has been swift and significant, sustained support from the country's partners will be needed if it is to bear fruit without destabilizing the country and degrading its environment. Substantial medium-term financial assistance will also be needed until the country's production base expands and new resources (petroleum and/or minerals, in particular) can take over. Mauritania's human development index of 139 is still low, its environment is fragile and under-protected, its institutions and their absorptive capacity are weak despite good-quality human resources, and visible, rapid progress in governance and human rights are indispensable, as the fourth Consultative Group emphasized in December 2001. UNDP will therefore concentrate its support on: (a) governance and human rights; and (b) sustainable environmental management and expansion of access to resources for the poor.

II. Past cooperation and lessons learned

7. The 1997-2001 country cooperation framework (CCF) addressed poverty reduction, governance and the environment. It was reviewed in July 2001 and extended until December 2002. The review showed that the programme would have benefited from being more focused and that national appropriation of policies and strategies formulated with external assistance or promoted from outside was being constrained by the political sensitivity of the target areas, the relatively limited absorptive capacity of the public administration and the absence of a tradition of intersectoral coordination.

8. The adoption by the UNDP office of a gradual strategy, which involved demonstrating UNDP capacities in carefully targeted operations, proved successful, but meant that execution of the country cooperation framework got off to rather a slow start. However, this strategy created a climate of considerable trust which was conducive to intensive advocacy, making it possible to attain or surpass most of its goals. A more intense communication strategy at all levels will make it possible to go even further in the coming years.

9. For all these reasons, the use of preparatory assistance in preference to support documents covering a three-year period proved appropriate, since it gave the UNDP office the flexibility it needed to make progress. Thus, only the poverty reduction programme benefited from a three-year support programme, while governance and the environment received preparatory assistance which was extended repeatedly and will permit the preparation in 2002 of three-year support documents for programmes which have been taken over entirely by the Government and its partners and given top priority nationally.

10. This approach has proved effective and has allowed the UNDP office to assist the Government in many strategic initiatives over the past two years: preparation and monitoring of the SFPR, capacity-building for non-governmental organizations, launching of governance activities and definition of several national sectoral policies and strategies. A good number of these programmes will be continued under the next country programme. Specific support will nevertheless have to be provided for monitoring the implementation of sectoral strategies, which UNDP is helping to define and which will serve as a framework for mobilizing external financing.

11. The results achieved increased confidence in UNDP, leading to three "cost-sharing" projects with the Government, and helped to mobilize external resources channelled through UNDP (Governments of Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and the United States and the Global Environment Facility (GEF)) and even to bring in new partners (Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations) or to bring back old ones (Government of Italy). The office should continue to seize every opportunity to make the country better known and to improve its international image, for instance, by increasing the number of international and regional meetings held in Mauritania. Advocacy, both inside and outside the country, backed by intensive communication, will thus continue to be an essential strategic element of the next country programme. UNDP support for the national radio station and for ICT will play a key role in that regard.

12. Lastly, the Government's wide use of national execution modalities (NEX) encountered problems related to the absorptive capacity of the public administration and civil society. The modalities were adjusted in 2001, leading to the organization of training workshops, a review of the national execution manual and the conduct of more effective annual audits. Synergy with the programmes of other agencies of the United Nations system continues to be hampered by the diversity of agencies' procedures and the need to build the Government's coordination capacity. The impact of the national good governance programme should lead to further improvements during the next country programme.

III. Proposed programme

13. The proposed programme is based on the recommendation of the July 2001 mid-term review, the priorities of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the SFPR, with a strategic vision to the year 2015. The goal of the programme is to contribute to the Government's long-term goals for poverty reduction, as defined in the SFPR, in response to the international commitment to the Millennium development goals.

The UNDAF framework

14. The SFPR is the strategic, programmatic framework at the national level which determines overall socio-economic choices and the allocation of resources. The UNDAF was formulated on the basis of that framework. Since all the areas of intervention were chosen for their contribution to poverty reduction, the UNDAF has no specific poverty reduction component.

15. The Common Country Assessment (CCA) identified five major constraints, related to the economic base, the population dynamic, the environment, the low level of development and institutional capacities. An in-depth causal analysis of these constraints during the formulation of the UNDAF led to the choice of four strategic areas of intervention: (a) promotion and strengthening of governance and human rights; (b) reduction of maternal, infant and child mortality; (c) education and training; and (d) reduction of poverty through sustainable environmental management, food security and access to resources. Of these four areas, two ((a) and (d)), are especially relevant to the UNDP mandate and justify the activities proposed for the 2003-2008 programme. UNDP will take action in the two other areas either within the framework of joint programmes of the United Nations system (such as girls' education) or through joint advocacy activities under the leadership of one of the other agencies.

16. *Objective 1: Strengthen governance and human rights*. The objective sought is the creation of an environment conducive to poverty reduction which will permit the effective use of available human and financial resources, the active participation of all the various development actors and greater social justice within a modern democratic environment. Governance, identified as one of the keys to the success of the SFPR, is included in the Government's agenda as the top priority for 2002. A detailed governance programme will be formulated in 2002 on the basis of the national framework of the national good governance programme prepared with UNDP assistance.

17. UNDP actions included in the UNDAF will help to: (a) strengthen democratic mechanisms, promote and protect human rights and strengthen civil society; (b) improve local governance and strengthen decentralization; (c) improve the performance of the public administration and build the capacity to identify and implement development policies; and (d) give national institutions the capacity to monitor and evaluate poverty, enabling them to report on developments in the areas of poverty, sustainable human development and the Millennium development goals and to develop better targeted poverty reduction programmes.

18. *Objective 2: Combat poverty through sustainable environmental management, food security and access to resources*. The strategic objective of the United Nations agencies is to combat poverty in rural areas as a matter of priority through concerted action in the areas of sustainable environmental management, food security and access to resources and means of production. UNDP actions will focus on the areas defined as priorities in the UNDAF: environment, energy, access of poor people to the means of production, and financial and human capacities of municipalities to combat poverty.

19. By ratifying and implementing the main environmental conventions, the Government has confirmed the priority it accords to the environment. The institutional context, however, remains hampered by a sectoral approach to environmental problems and by weak coordination and monitoring capacities. To begin with, UNDP will focus its support on building the capacities of the Government and civil society to better integrate natural resources management and environmental protection into development policies and programmes. Particular attention will be paid to defining and implementing an environmental monitoring system and to incorporating environmental issues in the principal reports and studies on poverty and sustainable human development. Pilot projects will be designed and executed with a view to promoting, by means of participatory management and operating systems, local administration of natural resources. Subsequently, UNDP will provide support to specific components of the national environmental action plan, inter alia, by helping to mobilize external resources.

20. With regard to access to the means of production, the proposed actions involve promoting the creation of a legal and operational framework that will foster professionalism in microfinancial institutions and the expansion of their activities to rural areas and defining and implementing policies and strategies for microfinance and microenterprise with a view to generating growth in poor communities.

21. Lastly, UNDP will support several pilot projects designed to identify and test appropriate mechanisms for providing municipalities with adequate financing to combat poverty. These actions will take place in the context of current efforts to regionalize the SFPR.

Partnership strategies and resource mobilization

22. The partnership with the Government operates within the framework of the UNDAF and basically seeks to use the competencies demonstrated by UNDP, particularly in defining sectoral policies and strategies for priority sectors, building national capacities for policy implementation and monitoring, and conducting pilot programmes in the field which permit innovation and reinforce UNDP advocacy. In the latter area, cost-sharing programmes, particularly with the Government, will be pursued.

23. With civil society, a closer partnership will be sought in the area of advocacy and in the implementation and monitoring of poverty reduction programmes. At the same time, capacity-building of civil society will continue under a programme financed jointly with the Government and other development partners, including the World Bank.

24. The partnership with the United Nations will be strengthened for existing joint advocacy activities, such as the promotion of human rights and efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, and will be developed in new sectors, such

as governance. In addition to the joint programme on girls' education currently under way, other joint activities will be developed and efforts will also be made to reduce, to the extent possible, the operational constraints caused by the procedures specific to each agency.

25. The partnership with the World Bank and the European Union will be developed in the areas of environment and governance, based on the strategic documents prepared by the Government with UNDP support.

26. With bilateral funding sources, the negotiations under way for the co-financing of poverty reduction projects and for supporting the press and decentralization (cyber-municipalities) will be brought to a conclusion. Bilateral sources provide only small amounts of funding because, for these sources, with the exception of Germany, Mauritania is not a country of concentration. The UNDP office will step up its advocacy with these partners, particularly those not represented in Nouakchott, to assist the Government in mobilizing more resources (through their regional programmes, for example).

IV. Programme management, monitoring and evaluation

27. National execution will continue to be the principal modality for executing projects and programmes within the context of the programme approach. Capacity-building to improve programme execution will remain a priority for the 2003-2008 country programme and will draw on actions taken under the good governance programme. The participation of civil society and the private sector will be encouraged.

28. The last two years of the 1997-2002 country cooperation framework were devoted to an in-depth restructuring of the UNDP country office. This restructuring will be consolidated and existing capacities developed to improve the office's performance in the areas of communication, networking, results-based management and matrix management.

29. The programme will be subject to an in-depth mid-term review in 2005, which will be conducted for the programmes of the other agencies at the same time and with their assistance.

30. This review and the annual monitoring and evaluation of programme activities will be based on the indicators of outcome in the strategic results framework, which are themselves directly linked to the monitoring indicators in the UNDAF for the period 2003-2008. The mechanism of control committees for each programme will be maintained but their role will be enhanced. Particular emphasis will be placed on building the capacities of national partners to adopt and use the modalities of results-based management. Financial monitoring of the programme will take place in the context of the Integrated Resource Framework (IRF) and the triennial sliding resource plan, both for UNDP resources and for those mobilized with other partners.

31. Since data on the execution and evaluation of policies and programmes are insufficient and scattered, UNDP will help design and set up systems for monitoring poverty, sustainable human development and the implementation of the sectoral policies that it has helped formulate (databases, information systems). Civil society will be mobilized to participate in these systems.

Annex

Results and resources framework

Strategic areas of support	*Intended outcomes*	*Indicators of outcome or purpose*	*Outputs, including key output indicators, where needed*	*Resources (by strategic area of support/output or programme area)*
UNDAF Objective 1: Strengthen governance and human rights				
Strengthening of institutional capacities, systems and procedures of parliaments	Strengthening of the internal organization of parliaments and training of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to improve the functioning of legislative committees and the preparation of texts and draft laws.	Parliament strengthened and participating actively in the legislative process. 2002: Opposition parliamentarians participating in Parliament for the first time. 2008: Higher level of debate and Parliament discharging its constitutional functions more fully.	Over 50 per cent of laws adopted result from parliamentary initiatives. Legal framework for the electoral system improved.	**Regular resources**: $192,200 **Other resources**: $192,000 Government contribution: $67,200 Third-party cost-sharing: $44,800 UNDP trust funds: $80,000
Human rights	Greater public awareness of human rights treaties and norms.	Human rights questions addressed publicly by the Government and the media. 2001: Sustainable human development (SHD) issues not addressed publicly. 2008: System for monitoring the national SHD plan operational, with civil society participating.	National human rights action plan and sectoral plans implemented. Human rights taught in all school courses and the subject of publicity and training campaigns.	**Regular resources**: $342,500 **Other resources**: $240,000 Government contribution: $84,000 Third-party cost-sharing: $56,000 UNDP trust funds: $100,000

Strategic areas of support	*Intended outcomes*	*Indicators of outcome or purpose*	*Outputs, including key output indicators, where needed*	*Resources (by strategic area of support output or programme area)*
Participation of destitute populations in the development process	Effective participation of civil society in debates on SHD and the Millennium development goals (MDGs) and as an agent of development at the national and local levels.	Civil society structured and non-governmental organizations participating in priority SHD and MDG programmes. 2001: Non-governmental organizations executing approximately 3 per cent of projects. 2008: Non-governmental organizations participating in the execution of at least 50 per cent of projects.	Structure of civil society improved, capacities of non-governmental organizations enhanced and consultative mechanisms operational. Professionalism of the press and radio enhanced. Non-governmental organizations have greater access to resources for their activities, particularly in the country's interior.	**Regular resources**: $472,300 **Other resources**: $357,600 Government contribution: $142,400 Third-party cost-sharing: $95,200 UNDP trust funds: $120,000
Decentralization policies	Human and financial resources mobilized and allocated to support decentralization and local governance in urban and rural areas.	Capacities of municipalities and level of resources to which they have access increased. 2002: Decision made to develop a strategy and an action plan. 2008: New legal framework in force and at least 30 municipalities adequately funded.	Strategy, action plan and framework law implemented. New fiscal framework for municipalities put into effect. Widespread access of municipalities to ICT. Resources of target municipalities augmented.	**Regular resources**: $600,000 **Other resources**: $550,000 Government contribution: $210,000 Third-party cost-sharing: $140,000 UNDP trust funds: $200,000

Strategic areas of support	*Intended outcomes*	*Indicators of outcome or purpose*	*Outputs, including key output indicators, where needed*	*Resources (by strategic area of support output or programme area)*
Accountability of the public administration	A public administration that is more effective in promoting development and serving the population.	A dynamic, ongoing process of modernization of the public administration pursued throughout the period, explicitly aimed at better oversight of public resources and attainment of MDGs. 2002: Good governance programme formulated and sectoral policies in the process of reformulation. 2008: Good governance programme executed and sectoral policies refer explicitly to MDGs.	At least 60 per cent of National Good Governance Plan implemented. Capacities to implement and monitor development programmes and sectoral policies strengthened in keeping with MDGs. Coordination of development assistance improved.	**Regular resources**: $1,000,000 **Other resources**: $760,000 Government contribution: $336,000 Third-party cost-sharing: $224,000 UNDP trust funds: $200,000
Monitoring of poverty and inequality	National capacity for gender-based monitoring of poverty (human and monetary) and inequality enhanced.	Country adopts national targets for the reduction of financial and monetary poverty, disaggregated by gender. 2002: Availability of PRSP consensus indicators. 2008: MDGs constitute the framework for long-term PRSP objectives.	Strategy for monitoring and evaluating poverty reduction programmes approved and implemented. Annual SHD/poverty and MDG reports published. Poverty profile developed incorporating MDG indicators and the qualitative dimension of poverty. Gender mainstreamed in development programmes and schooling for girls given priority.	**Regular resources**: $1,300,000 **Other resources**: $900,000 Government contribution: $480,000 Third-party cost-sharing: $320,000 UNDP trust funds: $100,000

Strategic areas of support	*Intended outcomes*	*Indicators of outcome or purpose*	*Outputs, including key output indicators, where needed*	*Resources (by strategic area of support output or programme area)*
UNDAF Objective 2: Combat rural and urban poverty through sustainable environmental management, food security and access to resources				
National policy and legislative and regulatory framework for sustainable development	Exhaustive approach to energy and environmental policy, integrated into national development planning and linked to poverty reduction.	A national environment action plan (PANE) and a central coordination mechanism are operational. 2001: Decision to formulate a national strategy. 2008: National resources allocated to environment and energy are increased and better targeted.	PANE and energy policy consistent with Rio+10 formulated and their objectives integrated into economic and sectoral policies and the SFPR. Priority components of PANE financed and executed. Institutional framework for coordination and monitoring redefined and environment taken into consideration at all decision-making levels.	**Regular resources**: $700,000 **Other resources**: $3,645,000 Government contribution: $750,000 Third-party cost-snaring: $495,000 GEF: $2,400,000
Monitoring and evaluation of environmental sustainability	Strengthening of national capacity to monitor environmental conditions and trends and to evaluate the effectiveness of environmental protection and promotion policies.	Aggregated indicators for the evaluation of environmental protection adopted and regularly updated by the Government. 2001: Data scattered, inaccessible and often outdated, and indicators unavailable. 2008: Multidimensional environmental monitoring system operational.	Environmental information system developed, operational and accessible to all users. Links between poverty and environment analysed and integrated in poverty profiles, the SFPR and the national human development report.	**Regular resources**: $300,000 **Other resources**: $1,018,400 Government contribution: $353,400 Third-party cost-sharing: $265,000 Capacity 21: $300,000 Montreal Protocol: $100,000

Strategic areas of support	*Intended outcomes*	*Indicators of outcome or purpose*	*Outputs (including key output indicators, where needed*	*Resources (by strategic area of support/output or programme area)*
Access to resources and productive assets	Development policy framework and regulatory framework reformed to give poor people greater access to financial services.	Microfinance management capacities of the National Bank and monetary and financial institutions augmented. 2001: Microfinance strategy in preparation. 2008: 100 per cent increase in volume of credit granted through monetary and financial institutions.	National microfinance, microenterprise and employment strategies adopted and implemented. Capacities of monetary and financial institutions augmented and their regulatory environment improved. Target micro-businesses strengthened and have access to financing.	**Regular resources**: $1,310,000 **Other resources**: $662,000 Government contribution: $337,000 Third-party cost-sharing: $225,000 UNDP trust funds: $100,000
Access to and use of ICT	National ICT strategies developed consultatively through strategic partnerships.	Policy dialogue held, working groups created and formal agreements concluded to clarify roles and responsibilities for implementation. 2002: Strategy proposal. 2008: Large-scale replication of successful results of pilot projects.	National ICT strategy and action plan approved following a participatory process. At least five pilot projects for community access to ICT and new applications tested.	**Regular resources**: $400,000 **Other resources**: $287,000 Government contribution: $112,000 Third-party cost-sharing: $75,000 UNDP trust funds: $100,000
				Total regular resources: $6,617,000 **Total other resources**: $8,612,000 **Grand total: $15,229,000**